Memory for forgetfulness: Conceptualizing a memory practice of settler colonial disavowal

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Abstract

This article articulates a sociological conception of settler colonial remembering as a tool of legitimation. Theories of memory in the context of settler colonialism generally center counter-memories by the subaltern or colonized, or official hegemonizing representations at the level of state institutions. Underexamined is the dialectical nature of memory and discursive representations that help reproduce settler colonial processes of accumulation and displacement at the micro-level. The article draws on archival data from avowedly socialist-leftist Zionist colonies to explicate patterned representations of Palestinian villages that Zionist forces gradually displaced prior to and during the 1948 War/Nakba. I demonstrate how the colonial settlers attributed political meaning through five representational modes: contrasting the indigenous as backward and primitive and settlers as progressive and developed; denying an indigenous connection to the land; emphasizing amiable relations through the promotion of cultural progress and settler superiority; asymmetrically assessing settler and indigenous belongings to national collectives; and legitimizing land purchases that dispossessed indigenous cultivators, despite the settlers' socialist ideology, while reducing conflict to the issue of economic compensation. I theorize a form of settler colonial memory based not merely on erasure, but on recognition and disavowal. Finally, I argue that local memory is a significant site of production in which the conceptual tools to both trace the historical processes of supremacy and subvert asymmetrical sociality lie.

Keywords Settler colonialism · Sociology · Memory · Legitimation · Representations of the past · Israel/Palestine

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This title is drawn from Darwish's (1995) *Memory for Forgetfulness: August, Beirut, 1982,* but used here to describe a different form of memory.

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On this earth what makes life worth living: ...the fear of invaders of memories.
-Mahmoud Darwish, "On This Earth What Makes Life Worth Living" (trans. Karim Abuawad).

Sociological theory needs to take the challenge of settler colonial studies seriously in explicating the *sui generis* processes, practices, structures, and fields of settler colonialism. Sociological theory often either elides colonial contexts (Go, 2009, 2013; Steinmetz, 2014) or fails to explain mechanisms particular to this social formation (even given its variations across time and space). Sociology has mainly articulated colonialism as an expansionist form of capitalist political economy (Marx, 1976:931–940; see also Foster et al., 2020). Yet, this does not explain most settler colonial projects. And despite the importance of a materialist history of settler colonization, the iterative co-production by cultural/epistemic and material processes of claims to territorial sovereignty deserves attention. I aim to explain settler colonialism—a category with its own governing ethos (Elkins and Pederson, 2005)—by attending to the undertheorized cultural mechanism of settler colonial memory that (re)produces domination and appropriation. Probing settler colonialism in this way takes memory and representations of the past as crucial to the logics and subjectivities through which social action is reproducible.

Sociological theories of collective memory have carefully tracked how certain memories become dominant, particularly on the level of institutionalized state cultural production (see Olick & Robbins, 1998), and also contended with subaltern memory and suppressed histories (see, e.g., Alexander et al., 2004). Attentive to memory realms on the fractured local, rather than national level, I argue that it is precisely in the spaces of local memory that we can locate the conceptual tools to subvert asymmetrical sociality and track the historical processes of supremacy reproduced by settler colonial memory that legitimate claims to territory. Artifacts produced by the colonized are often rare or unrecoverable, so records of settler colonial memory can be useful for two purposes: to trace the inner-workings of power through the meanings attached to social actions, and to retrieve disavowed socio-political forces and comprehend them within larger structures. Rather than psychologizing or psychoanalyzing modes of repression, I theorize memory production and disavowal as social and political processes.

To this end, I examine twentieth-century local evocations of displaced Palestinian villages and their inhabitants in the memories of three Hashomer Hatzair (The Young Guard) kibbutz colonies in the Jezreel Valley of Palestine—Mishmar ha-Emek, Hazorea, and Ein Hashofet—that now possess the home/land of their one-time Palestinian neighbors. This avowedly Marxist leftist Zionist settlement movement—composed mainly of Central and Eastern European immigrant colonial settlers—established more than 70 colonies across Palestine in the first half of the twentieth century. Most of these colonies were in close proximity to, or comprised, neighboring Palestinian village land. The movement was highly ideological and committed to Zionist productivization, the brotherhood of all peoples (its term for internationalism), and a specific version

of bi-nationalism.[1] It existed alongside a variety of other Zionist settlement movements (socialist and Revisionist), purchasing institutions (e.g., the Jewish National Fund and Palestine Land Development Company), and proto-state organizations (e.g., the Histadrut, Zionist Organization, and Jewish Agency), all working within the field of British imperial power (see Shafir, 1996).

Unlike existing works on "collective memory" that deal with public and official representations of the past, my focus on colonies of Hashomer Hatzair—a self-proclaimed leftist movement that claimed to maintain positive relations with its Palestinian neighbors, and indeed carried out daily social and economic interactions with them—enables me to examine more fractured representations of the past. I ask: How have memory and forgetting been organized and wielded among the kibbutzim? And how have settlers' memories reproduced, legitimated, erased, or contested their settler colonial practices? I find that memory practices are central to the iterative legitimations of territorial sovereignty. I pose five strategies used in the colonies: (1) contrasting the indigenous as backward and primitive versus the Zionist settlers as progressive and developed; (2) denying the Palestinian connection to the land; (3) emphasizing amiable relations through the promotion of cultural progress and settler superiority; (4) asymmetrically assessing the ways Jews and Palestinians belong to national collectives; and (5) legitimizing land purchases that dispossess Palestinian cultivators, while reducing conflict to the issue of economic compensation. The representations of the past, alongside documented reflections, are the organized manner that memory takes; the construction of memory sustains the colonial apparatus. A key characteristic of settler colonial memory, I find, is that it tethers the settlers to the indigenous in a simultaneous process of recognition and disavowal.

Situating settler colonial memory

Memory is a social practice (Bourdieu, 1977), in which individual dispositions, mental states, feelings, and actions are synthesized with objective structures. If we take culture to be "the constitutive symbolic dimension of all social processes" (Olick & Robbins, 1998:108), then memory becomes a primary cognitive practice through which normative values and ways of knowing are produced and circulated. The transmission, preservation, and modifications of memory are critical junctures in a culture's making (Alexander et al., 2004; Halbwachs, 1992; Olick, 1999; Olick et al., 2011; Ricoeur, 2010; Rydgren, 2007; West, 2008). I pose that memory can be its own form of capital, constituted by processual social relations. As an element of cultural and informational capitals (Bourdieu, 2000), memory presents as

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[1] In the early 1930s, Hashomer Hatzair publicized its political definition of a bi-national entity: "As a political guarantee for fulfilling Zionism we propose to create a political regime of political, economic and social equality, a regime whereby no one will rule the other" (Zayit 1993:276). Thus, bi-nationalism was a means to realize Zionism and express the movement's internationalism and its commitment to socialism. Hashomer Hayzair's demand to create a bi-national state that would be neither exclusively Jewish nor Arab has been interpreted by some as a partial recognition by a faction of the Zionist movement of the national rights of Palestinians (see, e.g., Beinin 1990).

a unique cultural-cum-epistemological process that operates through interactions of exchange, is hierarchical, and prefigures access to material privileges.

Much scholarship on memory, especially on Palestine/Israel, has emerged in the past three decades (e.g., Ben-Yehuda, 1995; Feige, 1999; Grinberg 2000; Halperin, 2021; Katriel, 1997; Kassem, 2011; Rouhana and Sabbagh-Khoury, 2019; Sa'di 2002; Sa'di and Abu-Lughod 2007; Sorek, 2015; Vinitzky-Seroussi, 2002; Zerubavel, 1995). Many of these studies focus on institutional and nationally-scaled representations of the past (memorials, monuments, museums, educational programs, parades) or memory policy. Research on Zionism and Israeli society conventionally contends that memory of the approximately 418 depopulated Palestinian villages[2] (Khalidi, 2006: 575) has been subject to processes of loss or erasure (through ethnic cleansing) from the Jewish-Israeli public sphere.[3] Previous research asserts that the material erasure of Palestinian villages parallels their discursive erasure in nearly all public spheres by ideological state apparatuses, including educational textbooks, official and state historiography, media, maps, and road signs (Beinin, 2005; Benvenisti, 1997; Kadman, 2008; Masalha, 2015).[4] Beinin (2005), for instance, discusses the process of "learning to forget" in the case of Zionism, where memories of destruction are strategically excluded in Israeli categories of knowledge.

Attending to practices of erasure is crucial to revealing how material hierarchies are sustained. Despite the significance of the literature cited above, inherent assumptions in each about the nature of memory—most prominently that hegemonic memory entails forgetting and erasing, whereas subaltern memory entails resisting through remembering—may inhibit a more "multidirectional" analysis (Rothberg, 2016). In contrast to studies that focus on the obliteration of Palestinian villages and their disappearance from the official "collective memory" in Israel (note that the term "collective" is highly debated; see Algazi, 2014; Bastide, 1978; Watchel, 1986), I am attuned to a divergent form of memory of the "socialist-leftist" Zionist stream. Transcending the binary of "remembering" and "forgetting" is necessary, not because such a binary is erroneous, but because it elides a central feature of micro-level memory in settler colonial cases: the simultaneous process of recognition and disavowal. Rather than simply a tool for the invention of tradition, producing allegiance to national identification, or national

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[2] The literature's estimate of the number of depopulated Palestinian villages ranges from 369 (Morris 2004:342) to 418 (Khalidi 2006:575) to 530 (Abu Sitta 2010:106). These differences can be attributed to variations in the definition of what constitutes a village or a small locale, the absence of systematic information, and whether the measurements include Palestinian villages that were uprooted before, during, and/or after 1948.

[3] Palestinian scholarship has focused on remembrance of places and persons as a form of resistance, manifesting the names, knowledge, and history of Palestinian places destroyed but not fully erased from Palestinian memory and history (see, e.g., al-Khalidi 1997; Seikaly 1998; Maniere, 1998; Arraf 2004; Ghanaim 2005; al-Dabbagh 2006; Abu Sitta 2000; Hassan 2008; Sa'di and Abu-Lughod 2007; Said 2008; Arafat n.d.).

[4] Benvenisti describes the process of erasure and re-writing of the Israeli map by giving new—and at times Biblical—names to Palestinian sites and geography. Kadman offers a detailed description of the actual erasure practiced by the Zionist institutions and Jewish settlers in the lands of 230 Palestinian villages, at times in their very homes. She argues that, in general, Palestinian villages have been pushed to the margins of the Israeli discourse.

myth-making (see Zubrzycki and Woźny, 2020), I pose that settler colonial memory—that is, the memory production of settlers on the interactive frontier—is a social practice that entails fractured, contingent, and strategic dimensions to legitimate territorial accumulation/dispossession and spatial presence through replacement.

Settler colonial memory in theory and practice

Colonialism is an irreducible social field with its own set of logics (Go, 2013:64). To grasp the logics of colonialism, sociologists must attend to cultural productions, cognition, and symbolic actions (Calhoun, 1996), not only of the dominated, but of the dominant as well (Stoler, 2008). Settler colonialism, as a sequence of forced territorial accumulation, expansion, and indigenous dispossession, relies on justificatory framings through which colonial actors perceive their actions and their claims. Memory forms part of a repertoire of legitimation tactics (Bruyneel, 2021; cf. Confino, 2015; Slyomovics, 1998). Memory is not simply a passive epistemological reflection or imprint, but is an active practice involving labor and political strategy—in the most basic sociological sense, contention over the distribution of power and resources. Memory entails the attribution of political meaning to past action and its legacy. In other words, it is the "politics of signification" (Hall, 1982). Just as economic or informational capitals, and territorial practices such as dispossession, sustain material infrastructures of rule, so too does memory buttress territorial claims by offering a hegemonic way of rationalizing presence and possession.

As I will show, in the process of settler colonialism, memory is not secondary to material practices of land redistribution. Through memory, individuals and collectives make sense of their roles in the past, not simply representationally but constitutively, that is, the self comes into being in both psychic and social ways (although I do not address the former). Because settler colonialism is a material process of territorial replacement, spatial belonging takes the form of memory following the moment of settlement. Memory can justify past deeds and legitimate enduring privileges; yet it can also raise unsettling questions about individual complicity in violence and perpetration. Memory-making can thus provide us with a unique "portrait of the colonizer" (Memmi, 2003), to understand how settler colonizers perceive and present themselves and the colonized.

I adopt this analytical stance from the writings of Albert Memmi. Memmi articulated the ideological and epistemological principles that impel settler colonizers to embrace racial superiority, material inequality, and colonial domination. More than a critical vocabulary, he provides a framework for understanding how colonialism's social formations are not only ruinous to those they oppress (the colonized) but shape how dominant status is (re)produced. To proclaim indubitable commensurability between Memmi's historical case (the French settler colonies of Algeria and Tunisia) and Zionist settler colonialism would be harmful, but to deny any capacity for comparison would prove deleterious. One must recognize the unique character of the Zionist European settlers, who were themselves subjects of racial domination, exclusion, and extermination, yet the Zionist settlement project contains commensurable structures of subordination.

It is important to note that although many prior memory studies examine Jewish victimhood in the ruins of the Nazi Holocaust (e.g., Hirsch, 2012; Olick & Robbins, 1998), it has been taboo to collocate the Holocaust and the Nakba. Edward Said (1999) was an early voice in challenging this taboo by describing Palestinians as "the victims of the victims, the refugees of the refugees." Nonetheless, until recently, asserting this connection remained beyond the pale for Israeli academic discourse (for an exception see Bashir & Goldberg, 2019). Sayigh (2013) argues that Palestinian trauma has largely been excluded from the "trauma genre" because of the political closure of "moral communities". Similar to how analyses of the Holocaust often place it apart from broader colonial and imperial histories, seeing the Holocaust as wholly exceptional (as Arendt, 1973; Kühne, 2013; Moses 2002; Shenhav, 2013; Zimmerer, 2012 and others write against), the study of Jewish-Israeli memory has been dislodged from its settler colonial context.[5]

Memmi (2003:13, 100) provides a basis for incorporating the Israeli-Palestinian case into memory studies, articulating colonization as a system that encompasses all: "For if colonization destroys the colonized, it also rots the colonizer.... The colonial situation manufactures colonialists, just as it manufactures the colonized." In the reality of entanglement, actions committed against the colonized simultaneously make the colonizer. Settler privileges are constituted by appropriation of the indigenous population, through material practices and representations.

Memmi helps deconstruct the processes that go into assembling an apparatus of settler privilege, offering a comparative-historical basis upon which I will assess the implications of leftist-Zionist settler colonial disavowal through the construction of selective memory. Memmi (2003: 96) writes about the falsification of history as a tool for colonizers to justify their coloniality:

> Accepting the reality of being a colonizer means agreeing to be a nonlegitimate privileged person, that is, a usurper. To be sure, a usurper claims his place and, if need be, will defend it by every means at his disposal. This amounts to saying that at the very time of his triumph, he admits that what triumphs in him is an image which he condemns. . . . He endeavors to falsify history, he rewrites laws, he would extinguish memories—anything to succeed in transforming his usurpation into legitimacy.

"Socialist Zionist settlers, as I will show, did not see themselves as usurpers, but rather understood their claim to territory and sovereignty through the convergence of their "religion of labor" ideology and implicit acceptance of Zionist return (although they scorned observance of Jewish law), denying the implications of their settlement on the Palestinian indigenous community. I will track the settlers' anxiety and their subsequent *structural* denial through the fissures of memory production. Settlers "misinterpret" their own political character (Memmi, 2003). For Zionist settlers, it was not their presence or acts of settlement that constituted the core of the problem, but instead the resistance they faced that engendered their unease.

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[5] E.g., in the Israeli journal *History and Memory*, conspicuously few articles discuss Zionism and colonialism.

The ideological basis for settlers' labor and practices around memory is constituted through a denial that continuously reproduces the settler colonial present and negation of indigenous rootedness:

> Having become aware of the unjust relationship which ties him to the colonized, he must continually attempt to absolve himself. He never forgets to make a public show of his own virtues, and will argue with vehemence to appear heroic and great. At the same time his privileges arise just as much from his glory as from degrading the colonized. He will persist in degrading them, using the darkest colors to depict them. If need be, he will act to devalue them, annihilate them. (Memmi, 2003:98)

This process of degradation exists in the memories of Zionist settlers, in their discursive relegation of the Palestinians, and in their adherence to a belief that whatever happened was not related to their settlement and displacement efforts. The absolution from foundational violence, or the move to claim irreproachability from that which was deemed a larger national conflict, obfuscates the ways settler colonialism is a process composed of contingent and often contradictory tactics on the ground.

In turning to memory, I seek to draw out Memmi's (2003:119) identification of the colonizers' "double reconstruction": "But there is one final act of distortion. The servitude of the colonized seemed scandalous to the colonizer and forced him to explain it away under the pain of ending the scandal and threatening his own existence. Thanks to a double reconstruction of the colonized and himself, he is able both to justify and reassure himself." To formulate a theory of settler colonialism, we must attend to the epistemological and representational moments of subjectivity formation, and to the mechanisms that enable the continuation of violence. I propose one way to proceed is through attending to settler colonizers' processual memory productions, inadvertent or deliberate, whose epistemological labor reveals the multifaceted, contested, yet nevertheless productive force of settler colonialism.

Methodology

To track the modes of representations and their function, I analyze materials from the Hashomer Hatzair movement's archives, specifically those of three constituent Kibbutz-colonies, Mishmar ha-Emek, Hazorea, and Ein Hashofet. These archival materials include commemorative publications, eulogies, biographies, interviews, books produced by the colonies about their own history, and local newsletters.[6] I primarily analyzed written publications, but I aspired to grasp the texture of everyday life. Indeed, the archives' materials, such as protocols of *siḥot kibbutz* (kibbutz assembly discussions), internal interview files, photographic collections, and correspondence, allowed me to reconstruct quotidian concerns and practices. Over six years, I spoke with archivists, gathered material, and analyzed hundreds of written and visual records produced from 1936 to 1956, the zenith of colonization in the

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[6] *Mishmar ha-Emek News*, *Ein Hashofet News*, and Hazorea's *Ba-Sha'ar* (At the Gate).

Jezreel Valley of Northern Palestine, and from the 1970s to the 1990s. Much of this archival material has not been previously cited in scholarly work.

Some of these textual sources were produced during the events themselves, but some rely on recall and later reconstruction (i.e., texts produced in the 1970s to 1990s). The differences in these sources point to a productive tension. Memory recall in the decades following historical events takes place from a greater distance, and thus might allow for more forthright reflections on historical violence, but it becomes embedded in long-crystalized nationalist politics and myths. Synchronic reflections (those during or directly following events) are less clouded by post hoc myth-making, but they are wrapped up in the Zionist "classification struggle" over whose social action most shaped the "revolutionary" project. Through my work in these archives, I theorized the function of the settler colonial archive: leftist settlers consciously and comprehensively labored to memorialize their efforts, ensuring the past *as they perceived it* would be preserved and recognized for the settlers' contributions to the Zionist project (Sabbagh-Khoury, 2022). In presenting a "portrait of the colonizer" (Memmi, 2003), I discuss how Hashomer Hayzair's representations of the Palestinians in these archived memories enabled settlers to evade their imbrication in historical processes of expulsion and dispossession.

Case selection

As an exceptional (but not altogether unique) case (Ermakoff, 2014), leftist Zionist settlement can shed light on processes and mechanisms of memory otherwise unseen in more "mundane" cases of settler colonization. Quotidien practices of colonization on the rural frontier prior to 1948 were implemented by communal colonies, such as Hashomer Hatzair, many of which avowed egalitarian values and did not initially envision the wholesale elimination of the Palestinians from historic Palestine (even as they participated in and benefited from expelling the indigenous). The scale of erasure in Palestine also differs from other settler colonial cases: liquidation (although never complete elimination) of natives in areas of what became the United States, for instance, and resultant practices of concentration or assimilation, differ from the ethnic cleansing, dispossession, and segregation of Palestinians, who remained in large numbers in a frontier that constituted part of a relatively smaller land mass with greater density. Zionist settlers attributed threat to perceived territorial reversibility in the frontier. Moreover, colonization in this case was also protracted (due to British mediation and Palestinian resistance): Zionist settlers and Palestinians frequently interacted.

Moreover, this colonization continues through the present, alongside efforts of indigenous resistance (e.g., demands for return). Whereas efforts at some material or symbolic reconciliation or acknowledgment of past injustices have been extended in other cases (e.g., in Canada and Australia)—despite potential ongoing forms of colonization and marginalization—in Palestine/Israel, colonization and national de-sovereignization continue without institutionalized efforts at reconciliation. Here, memory serves a crucial function of legitimation *of the present and the future* as colonization endures. This is not to say this is the only settler colonial case with these features; rather, these features are particularly pronounced here.

Selective modes of representation

As Ricoeur (2010:235) contends, "[I]t is in terms of representation that what memory intends can be formulated insofar as it is said to be about the past." So it is here that I begin my analysis of the leftist socialist kibbutzim. Despite its settler colonial features, Hashomer Hayzair is largely perceived as the radical leftist flank on the Zionist political spectrum. The movement believed in the brotherhood of peoples, social justice, socialism (social revolution in ownership over the means of production), and a specific version of bi-nationalism (see Bentov, 1946). Unlike other settlement movements, it maintained intricate social relations with neighboring Arab villagers. Yet it also played a major role in the settler colonial project prior to 1948, dotting fertile areas of historic Palestine with colonies to establish the territorial contiguity desired for a sovereign state. The movement opposed hegemonic positions in the Zionist and labor movements, while simultaneously embracing an active role in the Zionist colonization of Palestine.[7]

One distinguishing ideological precept of Hashomer Hatzair is the importance it attached to maintaining relations and cooperating with the Arab population. The three kibbutzim of interest here, Mishmar ha-Emek, Hazorea, and Ein Hashofet, aimed to cultivate social and economic relations with the neighboring Palestinian villagers, including Abu Shusha, al-Ghubbaya al-Fauqa, al-Ghubbaya al-Tahta, al-Naghnaghiya, Qira-Qamun, Abu Zureiq, Jo'ara, and al-Kafrayn. During the Nakba, all the villages in the Bilad al-Ruha region (the western part of Marj Ibn 'Amer—the Jezreel Valley) were depopulated, including those whose lands and property were taken over by the three kibbutzim.

Drawing on testimonies from all three kibbutzim, I argue that "erasure" does not suffice to conceptualize relations between a settler colonial society and its memory of the indigenous. In this case, the kibbutz settlers did not fully conceal or eradicate the memory of the Palestinian villages. On the contrary, the villages and their inhabitants ("the Arab neighbors" as kibbutz members called them) are a fundamental part of the settler colonial representation of the past through memory. Indeed, the local history and narratives of the three kibbutzim are anchored in their reference to the Palestinian villages. Although the villages themselves were destroyed, they continued to exist in the kibbutz consciousness—in children's stories, kibbutz anniversary anthologies, interviews with veteran kibbutz settlers, and kibbutz press publications. The kibbutzim did not erase the entire memory of the villages, but the process of taking land and property were excluded in their memories. There is thus a clear distinction between the kibbutzim's memories of Palestinian people and villages versus memories of how these people's property, including village lands, were forcibly appropriated.

In transcending the binary of forgetting and remembering, I address the components of memory and their transformation across temporalities. I propose five modes of kibbutz representation: (1) a division between backwardness and primitiveness versus progress and development; (2) a belief that Arabs lack deep connections to

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[7] In January 1948, the movement joined with Ahdut Ha-Avoda-Poalei Zion Left to form MAPAM, which existed until 1992, when it joined Ratz and Shinuy to form Meretz.

the land; (3) a sense of good neighborly relations between Jewish kibbutzim and Arab villages, and a promotion of cultural progress from the settlers' position of superiority; (4) asymmetrical renderings of belonging to a national collective; and (5) a belief in the legitimacy of land purchase and reduction of the conflict over land to the issue of economic compensation.

Memory for forgetfulness

In early-twentieth-century Palestine, "socialist-leftist" Zionist settlers who were engaged in a project of coerced territorial redistribution generally did not see their colonization practices as at odds with their commitment to collectivist cooperation and class liberation. What is at stake here is not hypocrisy but a dialectic that constituted leftist socialist Zionism and the labor Zionist movement writ large. Still, these settlers used civilizing discourses, accumulated and settled land, and played a material role in dispossessing Arabs from territory and sovereignty. Notwithstanding their colonial disavowals, or perhaps in spite of them, kibbutz settlers *did* debate their ensnarement in a national project and reacted to the "disappearance" of Arab villages. They certainly did not obliterate this history from their consciousness.

Palestinian villages have always been part-and-parcel of the representation of the past for kibbutz settlers in the leftist Zionist stream. In Mishmar ha-Emek's archive, for example, I found an explicit rendering of the complexity of Palestinian life. In a 1994 interview, kibbutz member Elisha Lin remembers the kibbutz surroundings:

> To the east: "Ghubbaya Tahta" [Lower Ghabbaya]. . . . To the south: "Kufreyn" [al-Kafrayn]. The meaning of its name is "two villages," a large, hostile village. According to its inhabitants, this village contained people from Umm al-Fahm and Umm az Zinat to cultivate farmland in the hills. Over the years the giant village grew and now resembles a town. There was a village called "Hubeiza" [Khubeza] (Kibbutz Gil'ad later settled nearby). Further in the direction of Bat Shlomo lay the village of "Sindiyana," towards Daliyat al-Ruha whose lands were purchased by the JNF [Jewish National Fund] and its inhabitants displaced. Near Ramat Hashofet was also the village of "Rihaniyya" (where the only son of the Jewish governor of the north was killed in a retaliation operation: an Arab came out with a hunting rifle and killed the young man, the only casualty among our forces). To the west: "Abu Shusha"– our neighboring village. Its inhabitants, Turkmen Arabs who came here as Bedouins 150 years ago and have cultivated their land ever since, especially fruit tree groves. They were poor. Their children had a school whose director, incidentally, was the son of a Jewess from Zikhron Ya'akov, and was known as a vehement Jew-hater. . . . Further on lay "Abu Zureiq," a very hostile village, bypassed by the road. The Arabs there, too, were very dark skinned, like those of Lydd el-'Awadin. . . . Another village to the west was "Qiri" [Qira] (between Hazorea and the present Yokne'am). Its inhabitants left the village after their land had been

bought. In all three directions—east, south and west—lay villages, and to the north, beyond the road, were the fields.[8]

This interview with a prominent member of Mishmar ha-Emek reads as though the speaker were a Palestinian describing the uprooted villages in the area prior to the Nakba, with precision and great knowledge of the surroundings. The complete map of the region is preserved in his memory, and at times he slipped into speaking of the villages in the present tense (e.g., al-Kafrayn, non-existent since 1948). The map is not empty. In his remarks, the settler named the Jewish settlements that replaced the Palestinian villages. Yet he described few concrete details of the villages, and virtually nothing about what befell them. In two cases, the settler mentioned inhabitants' skin color, as well as the fertility of the lands of one village, the poverty of villagers in another, and the existence of a school whose director was the son of a Jewess who converted to Islam. The gaze is external; his descriptions include village names, locations, origins, and their relation to the Jewish settlement—either "peaceful" or "hostile." The only interactions mentioned are Arab assaults against settlers.

The kibbutzim expropriated the Palestinian lands and property after the inhabitants' expulsion in 1948. During the war, the kibbutzim turned to the authorities—the Jewish National Fund, the Agricultural Center, and settling institutions, and later, to state institutions in charge of Palestinian property—to ensure the lands of the neighboring Palestinian village were transferred into their possession.[9] Whereas in 1948, the political conferences of MAPAM (The United Workers' Party) and the Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Artzi movement described the control of Palestinian lands and property as temporary until the return of the refugees, the kibbutzim called on the settling institutions to regulate control over land and property as soon as possible. These discussions, as reflected in written testimonies, died down in the early 1950s. In this respect, normalization of the "disappearance" of entire villages and their inhabitants took hold relatively quickly, and a significant gap opened between the political positions of the movement in general and the positions and actions of the settlers on the ground. References to the destroyed villages appear in correspondence as part of the procedures regulating the appropriation and cultivation of vacated lands. Immediately after the 1948 Nakba, the most prominent written representation of Palestinian villages in the archives did not describe people and communities (largely but not entirely absent), but rather their lands.

In my fieldwork in the colonial kibbutz archives, I found tables and records documenting the distribution of lands and property of the Palestinian villages pre-state, listing the villages by name and the dunams transferred to each kibbutz (see Table 1). With time, however, the origin of the Arab lands of the kibbutzim blurred, and settlers no longer demarcated plots of land by ascribing them to villages that formerly existed in the area. Yet even after the Palestinian origin of kibbutz lands was blurred, memory of the villages' existence did not vanish from the kibbutzim. Consciousness of the villages' lands was present

[8] Elisha Lin, "Stories Along the Way 1927–1992," Interviews with Tamar Snir, 1994, Mishmar ha-Emek Archive.

[9] Such examples can be found in the Ein Hashofet Archive, Lands file no. 302 (1953–1965); file on land-clearing and drainage, no. 301 (1938–1952), as well as in the archives of Hazorea and Mishmar ha-Emek.

inasmuch as the land was valuable to the kibbutzim expansionist project: Palestinian existence was an obstacle to more robust settlement, yet the settlers did not account for the causality inherent in their actions as an encroachment. Herein lies the importance of distinguishing between memory of villages and that of lands; or, to put it differently, differentiating between the memory of villages and their inhabitants versus their property and resources. Numerous tables depict the systematic and planned pattern of Zionist settlement simply by detailed listings of the Palestinian past. The lands of neighboring Palestinians were certainly on settlers' minds, and their modes of knowledge about neighboring villages produced as much as it represented their settler colonial forced amnesia.

Settler colonial representations

Among settler colonizers, representations are not merely discursive descriptions of a past temporality; rather, they are enduring forms of justification that still shape settler colonial sovereignty and constitute the apparatus of ethno-national supremacy. Memory work is not simply ideational: it significantly shapes contemporary legitimations for material privilege. Cultural productions and the materialist dynamics of colonialism are mutually constituted. Five paradigmatic modes of representation of the Arab villages emerge in the kibbutzim archives I examined.

Backwardness and primitiveness versus progress: labor and development

In keeping with an orientalist mode of representation, the kibbutz memorial records portray Arab villages in conditions of backwardness and penury; their lands are represented as destitute or neglected, their society primitive and oppressively patriarchal. Namely, villages are depicted as the opposite of a developed settler society. A memory from Mishmar ha-Emek, published in 1940, about relations with the neighboring Arab villages, shows the typical portrayal of Palestinian villages as backward. The discourse in this quote is not simply a representation of Palestinian neighbors' reactions; it reflects how settlers perceived themselves:

> We told them [the Arabs of Abu Shusha] of our grand plans: our desire to found a large cowshed, a coop with thousands of chickens, sheep and goat herds. They shook their heads and said: "These are tall tales. You won't be able to do this here, there's no water. The earth here is infertile." But over the years their minds changed. They saw the tractor plowing. They saw dozens of dunams plowed that very day—and their jaws dropped: such a machine, a wonder machine. They saw how we dug wells and after months of effort, water burst from the depths of the earth. . . . They saw the veg-

Table 1 Kibbutz Ein Hashofet, cultivation of abandoned lands, 1952[a]

Village name	Area in dunams
Ein Hashofet (Jo'ara and Daliyat al-Ruha)	2,575
Al-Kafrayn	1,445
Al-Mansi	700
Abu-Shusha	330
al-Lajjun, Rummana, and Zububa	958
Total	6,008

[a]Reproduced from a letter sent by Kibbutz Ein Hashofet to the department of uncultivated lands, Ministry of Agriculture, Government Offices, most likely in 1952 [date unclear]. Ein Hashofet Archive, file no. 301—land, clearing of stones and drainage, 1938–1952

etable beds, the nursery and fruit tree groves emerge like mushrooms and decorate the hills with their fresh greenery.[10]

Describing Palestinians' reaction to the tractor as a "wonder machine" amplifies their status as primitive, ignoring the fact that in the neighboring Palestinian village of Abu Zureiq, for example, agricultural machinery was already in use. The settlers' ability to make the "wasteland" flourish was a claim to a stronger bond to and knowledge of the land than that held by its indigenous people, who were unable to decorate the hills with "fresh greenery."

This is typical of kibbutz settlers' descriptions of villages: they wrote of the inhabited center of the Arab locality and rarely its cultivated areas. In 1970, talking to kibbutz children, one of Hazorea's first settlers recounted his memory of the colony's neighboring Qira village:

There were no trees there back then, it was entirely bare. There were caves, and in front of the caves were small clay huts, and only one stone house, a bit larger. Among the houses various tracks zigzagged . . . and in this village lived Arabs, one or two hundred Arabs, I don't know how many, old Arabs and young Arabs and women, all dressed in black from head to toe. . . . And those Arabs were very poor, because the land was not their own. It belonged to some very rich effendi who lived in Beirut or in Paris.[11]

The name of the village was preserved, but this description indicates that nothing actually remained of it. Indeed, except for Khan Qira (demolished in the 1960s), the village was thoroughly destroyed in 1948, and the site plowed over. The settler painted a picture of Qira village as primitive. It was small, he wrote (in fact, in 1945 the village was home to 410 inhabitants, but after a gradual process of repeated expulsions by the kibbutz, only 100 Palestinians remained in 1948). According to the settler, the Arabs lived in miserable conditions and were exploited by foreign "effendis," the

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[10] "Relations with the Neighboring Arabs," *Mishmar ha-Emek News*, November 3, 1976, Mishmar ha-Emek Archive.

[11] Rafael Tavor, "The Kibbutz Founders Tell the Children on the Kibbutz Anniversary," February 26, 1970, Hazorea Archive, file on relations with the Arabs of the region, no. 73, also file 021.

landowners. In the "socialist orientalist" schema, Zionist settlers conceived of Arabs as a powerless, exploited lumpenproletariat, neither agents of their own selves nor a class capable of class consciousness, thereby denying that the land tenure arrangement and its transformation by the British Empire facilitated Zionist settlement. The description entirely overlooked the cultivated lands of Qira village, which were only mentioned here by negation, as something owned from a distance, not by the villagers.

In other cases, kibbutz settlers depicted the same village as "miserable and poor," emphasizing villagers' primitiveness and maltreatment of women through the imagery of caves (see Ben Yaacov, 1990:34). The fact that some inhabitants lived in caves, and others tents and shacks, became an essential characterization that ascribed the inhabitants to another, pre-historic era: literally as "cavemen," to a time before modernity and progress. Settlers depicted the Arab population as primitive and therefore ineligible to be rightfully indigenous, or subjects who could constitute their own sovereignty, whereas the pre-*Yishuv* Jews were described as continuing a perpetual Jewish presence in the Jewish homeland. Reference to the past is selective. The settlers' Zionism constructed a linear timeline of redemption, while relegating the Palestinians to a people *without* a history, *outside* of history, or to a false or fabricated history.

A children's story by one settler repeated the trope of primitiveness: "[T]hese lands on which we sit today used to belong to some very rich effendi from Damascus; the lands were farmed for him by poor people living on Qiri mountain, simple poor *falaheen* who had no property because they had to give up most of their harvest to that effendi."[12] The author surmised that "those Arabs lived so very miserably in caves on Qiri mountain," and after their forcible displacement, they relocated to a "lovely village," Ka'abiya. This memory practice represents the expulsion of the peasants as part of their progress: the settlers were the ones who erected a new place and form of living that was worthy of notice. Highlighting backwardness justified the erasure of the Palestinians from their land.

This is where the analysis of settler memory becomes a viable tool in deconstructing the settler colonial apparatus. How did these Zionist settlers, who maintained putatively socialist ideologies, make sense of this dispossession and exploitation, typical of the ideology of capitalism rather than socialism? In this mode of Zionist colonization, socialism generated ideologies of colonialism, and the narratives of legitimation were connected to a socialist collectivist ideology: the discourse of Jewish labor, the settlers who were productive, and colonial-socialist notions (primarily A. D. Gordon's thought) made productive labor the basis for just sovereignty, mirroring the Western political tradition (see Gordon, 1997). Although the "socialist" Zionist movement did not rely on capitalist liberal jargon, we can trace the workings of notions of ownership and their implementation on the ground among the kibbutz settlers. In Lockean liberalism, land ownership is attained through one's

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[12] Elisheva Tamir, *The Kibbutz Founders Tell the Children About the* Kibbutz *Anniversary*, February 26, 1970, Hazorea Archive, file on relations with the Arabs of the area, no. 73. This segment is replete with exaggerated rhetoric: Palestinian peasants were typically required to hand over one-quarter to one-third of the harvest (Al-Hizmawi 1998).

labor, by making land productive. This principle has historically formed a legitimizing basis to expel or expropriate indigenous territory, as the native can be deemed non-productive (Wolfe, 2016). In the case of Zionist socialist settlers in Palestine, this ideology was the basis for their self-legitimacy: the socialist common spaces and collective land held for the Jewish settlers was dispossessed from the Palestinians under the pretext of their purported unproductiveness. The socialist negation of private property in the kibbutz is not so much contradictory as it is realized for an exclusive group—Zionist settlers.

The Palestinian villages also appear in a memorial book produced for the 25th anniversary of Ein Hashofet, which divided local history into four periods: pre-historic, Canaanite-Israelite, Hellenistic, and Arab (Ein Hashofet 1962).[13] The Canaanite-Israelite period was described in relation to the Biblical story of the fortress of Megiddo, with Beit Ras and Jo'ara being frontiers. The authors wrote that they had in their possession ceramics, specifically an ivory scarab from the Hyksos period and a black stone figurine from 1200–800 BCE. They described the Jewish inhabitants as farmers who traded with other inhabitants of the area. Thus the Arab village of Jo'ara—which "disappeared" to make way for Ein Hashofet—was integrated into the Biblical landscape. "Jewish inhabitants" were farmers, whereas in the Arab period, Palestinian villages were described as scantly populated, detrimental to the land, and obstructive of the "true history" of the place. The book juxtaposes a glorious ancient past with Arab decline and misery. In its story, the Arab village al-Kafrayn "was destroyed" in 1948—no indication how—nor is any mention made of the date of Jo'ara's uprooting. In spite of the numerous Palestinian villages in the area, the land became "desolate"—counter to Zionist settlers' own descriptions of the 1930s and 1940s.

Jewish settlement is presented as diametrically opposed to the Arab period. Settlers are made out to be productive and therefore superior to the indigenous villagers; the former are said to be better at using the soil than the natives: "The rocky wasteland is now covered by the Menashe forest, and most of this rock-strewn land is now fruit tree groves, vegetable gardens and grain fields.... A visitor at the Plain [of Manasseh] today could not imagine that this blooming region was a desolate rocky wasteland only thirty years ago, uninhabited but for some impoverished and miserable Arab villages" (Gadna Battalion, 1970:42). Despite creating the impression of a "desolate rocky wasteland, uninhabited" before the kibbutz, the text mentions that more than one Palestinian village had existed there. In this mode of representation, settler colonialism erases the indigenous but conjures them symbolically to mark its own uniqueness (Wolfe, 2006). This is not specific to the Israeli context. Such tactics have played a role in justificatory regimes in other cases of settler colonialism: that is, the depiction of the productive superiority of settlers who are better able to use the land than the indigenous people, who are perceived as primitive. In the larger ambit of knowledge production and settler colonialism, the victor's storytelling becomes the empirical basis for settler continuity.

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[13] A similar trend to the one presented here can be found in the archive of Mishmar ha-Emek: Micha Lin, "Geva, Tel Abu Shusha, Tel Shush," 1986, file on Jewish–Arab relations, 3.41.

What differentiates these leftist settlers from other colonial settlers, and from right-wing Zionist settlers, was their belief in scientific socialism—freedom from market exploitation and the formation of a classless society—and progress (in the transformation in means of production). Capitalism was certainly an impetus in other settler colonial cases and can be traced in some aspects of Zionism (e.g., in the citrus sector). However, the history of Zionism is distinct for the prominent role anti-capitalist ideologies had in the colonization process. Adherence to a logic of socialist modernity was translated into the settler colonial civilizing discourse, as settlers adopted a teleological understanding of progress alongside their Jewish liberationist values. These Zionist settlers believed they could redeem land through labor (not in an individualist capitalist exploitative form, but by collective pioneering), and their technological modernist dream of progress was fabricated only with reference to a regressive or anterior Other. In their quest to establish a classless order, they effectively proletarianized the Palestinian peasantry by displacing them from the land on which they lived and worked—this expressly clashed with their own ideology around classlessness (Sabbagh-Khoury, forthcoming). For these settlers, their settlement actions did not contradict their socialist values. However, Zionism, as a settler colonial sequence of replacement, inherently contradicts the socialism and brotherhood of peoples these settlers professed.

Negating rootedness and reinforcing nomad-ness: the Arabs' lack of deep ties

Representation of the indigenous as nomadic and not as cultivators shaped the contours of the negation of indigenous right to land and to sovereignty. As in other instances of settler colonialism, Palestinians of the neighboring villages were represented as rootless (Veracini, 2010; Wolfe, 2006). They were depicted as nomadic Bedouins or people whose origins are found elsewhere, even though they were not strictly nomadic and were heavily engaged in agriculture and farming. Articulating them as nomadic made their transfer from their village merely an issue of economic compensation. Thus, for example, *Mishmar ha-Emek News*, the local kibbutz newspaper, published a piece headlined: "Our Arab former-neighbors were not Arabs." In essence, this article reiterated a known fact, that many of the neighboring villagers were of Turkmen origin, but the headline reveals the message is mostly a negation of anything Arab—and thus their indigeneity:

> The Turkmen villagers are descendants of Turkish tribes from Asia Minor. They first appeared in the history of the land in the 12th century. . . . Small Turkmen tribes settled around Haifa, in the western Jezre'el Valley and in the northern Sharon area. . . . During the British Mandate the Turkmen put up tents and clay huts, and over time, small villages appeared in their habitat between Megiddo and Yoqne'am. They also gave up their herds and proceeded to cultivate the land. . . . During the War of Independence the Turkmen assisted Arab gangs that fought the Jews around Mishmar Ha-Emek. When the Jewish combatants gained the upper hand, the Arabs escaped the entire region and along

with them, the Turkmen evacuated their small villages, which turned into piles of rubble. (*Mishmar ha-Emek News*, July 14, 1972)[14]

This story offers a striking depiction of disavowal: it is "Jewish combatants" who "gained the upper hand," not "we," the kibbutz settlers. When "the Arabs escaped the entire region along with them, the Turkmen evacuated their small villages, which turned into piles of rubble," responsibility is abdicated. It was not Jewish combatants who actively turn the once-populated villages to rubble, but the villages themselves that passively "turned into" rubble, eliding an agent's doing. Here, the Zionist settlers absent themselves from the moment of 1948, from the depopulation of their neighbors' villages, to maintain a leftist ideology of brotherhood and equality.[15] It is not just that the villages turned into piles of rubble, but it could not have been the kibbutz settlers themselves who directly caused such a result, or who could be deemed perpetrators or beneficiaries. This representation shows a blurred story of national action, rather than the happenings of local activity with local agents.

The importance of emphasizing the rootlessness of the indigenous population is apparent in a sincere dialogue between Hazorea settlers recounting their memories. Disconnecting the Arabs from their lands, a settler displaces Arab indigenous sovereignty:

Arnon Tamir: But they considered themselves Arabs?
Yohanan Ben Yaacov: Definitely!
Tamir: How did they [Abu Zureiq inhabitants] get here?
Ben Yaacov: I don't know history. *I believe they came from Turkey at some point.* There is literature that the kibbutz members have collected. Anyway, they had not always been here.[16]

Emphasizing the non-local origins of the Palestinian inhabitants also allows a smoother representation of Jewish Zionist colonialism as the re-settlement of the Promised Land. Such representation is an important characteristic of settler colonialism in the Zionist Israeli case. But kibbutzim documents from the time contain hardly any reference to claims of a promised land. The words of Yitzhak Ben Shemesh of Ein Hashofet are an exception in this respect:

[A] prophecy convinced some of the Kafrayn villagers to sit tight on their "*mulk*"[17] ground and even help the Jews settling the Plain [of Manasseh] with food, equipment and mediation in land purchases. The Arabs of Kafrayn never

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[14] In the Hazorea archive: "Land file no. 21" and "File on Our Relations with the Arabs of the Area" contain materials on Palestinians who lived in Qira and Abu Zureiq; also "Turkmen in the Jezre'el Valley—the Tragic End," an undated document, file on "Our Relations with the Arabs of the Area," 073. In Mishmar ha-Emek archive: file on "Relations with the Arab Neighbors." In Ein Hashofet Archive, container on the history of Jo'ara, 4; *Ein Hashofet News*, 1937–1939.

[15] This is a general trend reflected in the history of the Zionist movement and the state of Israel, and can be seen in the case of Zionist disavowal of implication in the Tantura massacre (Confino 2015).

[16] Arnon Tamir, conversation with Yohanan Ben Yaacov, March 12, 1976, Hazorea Archive, file on personal documentation of Hazorea members about their lives on the kibbutz a-f, no. 003/74.

[17] "Mulk" is one of the categories of land ownership established in the Ottoman period. "Mulk land" is effectively privately owned, and its owners are free to use the land as they please.

believed the Jews would expel them, but on the day Qawuqji's armed assault was repelled at Mishmar ha-Emek (April 12, 1948), Palmah forces charged the village with gunshots in the air and beatings. Kafrayn's inhabitants did not resist.[18]

This story attributes to the Palestinian inhabitants the belief in a proto-Zionist narrative about the return of Jews to their land. Such traditions have hardly been researched. Cohen (2003) attributes them to Zionist-messianic circles, but here the story comes from within the kibbutz milieu of Hashomer Hatzair. The belief in the return of the Jews, according to the settler, is supposed to explain the good relations maintained by al-Kafrayn's Palestinian villagers with Kibbutz Ein Hashofet. He hints this was the reason Palestinians did not believe they would be expelled, and that is why they "did not resist." This discourse produces a division: who is *more* rooted to the land—the Jews or the Arabs? The answer provided here is the Jews, which serves as a legitimating feature of Jewish exclusivity to the promised land. This idea circulated even among secular "socialist-leftist" settlers, whose logic is best encapsulated by Raz-Krakotzkin's (2005) witty aphorism: "God doesn't exist, but he promised us the land."

The replacement narrative was undoubtedly asserted with the help of the religious tale, explaining how the land was destined to be inhabited by Jewish settlers and how the Arab Palestinians would make a place for them. This tale is fascinatingly justificatory: foregrounding holy *Eretz Yisrael* by Arab Palestinian willingness to initiate the process of transformation depicts settlers' colonial acts not as appropriation but as divine reciprocity. The soil of the town passed from its Palestinian inhabitants and became the land and property of civilized Zionist settlers who transformed the wilderness into a fruitful field. The discursive form of rootlessness renders the indigenous invisibles who are unable to exercise sovereignty in the home/land.

Yet, Palestinian survivors, that is, those who remained in their homeland after 1948 and those who were expelled out of historic Palestine who continue to claim their right to their lands, refute this Zionist depiction.[19] A salient example of this is found in the issue of refugee return, which constitutes a main point of contention between Palestinians and the State of Israel. While the representations of Arab unrootedness took hold among Zionist settlers, their incessant assertions of and practices around indigeneity highlight the precarious defense of the Zionist left's belief in Jewish exclusivity. In this way, we can trace the emergence of the hegemonic Jewish-Israeli cultural tenets, which claimed and continue to argue that Palestinians are not connected to the land, have no culture, and have never been more than their small villages.

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[18] Interview with Yitzhak Ben Shemesh, undated, among sundry materials from different kibbutzim regarding kibbutz members' deliberations following the War of Independence—about Arab property that remained after inhabitants' displacement from their villages, Hazorea archive, file on relations with the Arabs of the area, no. 073.

[19] Such reflections were evident in interviews I conducted with Palestinian refugees, who asserted their rootedness to the land.

Good neighborly relations and the promotion of cultural progress from the settlers' position of superiority

Another mode of representation Zionists used in depicting Palestinian villages was the claim that the kibbutzim and neighboring villages maintained mutually beneficial relations, and that the kibbutzim promoted cultural progress. In this discourse, there may have been petty localized conflicts between Jews and Arabs, but larger conflicts were due to external factors inciting the local inhabitants. However, on closer examination, a different picture unfolds: Hashomer Hatzair kibbutz settlers had few interactions with their Palestinian surroundings, and most of these encounters were facilitated by a small group of kibbutz settlers who specialized in these contacts.

In a memorial book published to mark the 60th anniversary of the founding of Kibbutz Hazorea, *Kibbutz Hazorea 1936–1996—Circles One by One and Together* (1996), five pages are dedicated to memorializing relations with Arab neighbors and villages in the area, under the subheading "We Are Brothers." Articles written by kibbutz settlers were accompanied by four photos, with the captions: "Yohanan Ben Ya'akov and the guards at the Khan, 1935," "Qiri 1940," "A neighborly visit 1941," and "Efrayim Levi with an acquaintance from Ein Mahal 1976." The photos and captions reflect some basic components of the representation of neighboring villages. The first photo refers to the kibbutz in its early days employing Arabs as guards, the second shows the Palestinian village of Qira as part of the landscape of the past, and the third relates to the tendency to describe good neighborly relations with the Arab neighbors and mutual visits of kibbutz settlers and villagers. Good neighborly relations were perceived as proof of a possible solution to the tension between the settler colonial project and kibbutz settlers' commitment to humanist and socialist ideals.[20]

For example, kibbutz memory was transmitted to the younger generation in the game "Treasure Hunt" (created in 1988), a riddle with large sections of text reviewing the history of Zionist settlement. The solution to the game's riddle ends with a description of the villagers of Abu Zureiq escaping their homes as kibbutz members look on. The destruction of the village is not perceived as part of a long-term conflict or settler colonial process resulting in the uprooting of villagers, but rather as the disappointing end of an attempt to create good neighborly relations: "This brought to an end years of creating and maintaining good neighborly relations which, even if they did not include all the members of the kibbutz, still made up an integral part of the values, beliefs and hopes which the founders aspired to lay as the kibbutz's ideological foundation."[21]

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[20] Elisha Lin, "Stories Along the Way 1927–1992, interviewed by Tamar Snir, February 1994, Mishmar ha-Emek Archive, (bi-national ideology), Shatil 1977:48–50 (socialism).

[21] "Danny Nehab, Solution of the Riddle—Treasure Hunt" summer, 1988, Hazorea Archive, file on relations with the Arabs of the area, no. 073.

While these words, part of a cultural memory apparatus, are a late summary delivered by someone who did not experience the events in person, a similar mode is found in the memory of a veteran settler of Mishmar ha-Emek, who wrote in 1976:

> Relations with the neighbors were based not only on mutual visits but also on mutual assistance. From our neighbors we first learned about the conditions of our environment, the rainy season and winter and summer sowing of grains, as well as about other neighbors near and far. Then they began to learn from us, having witnessed our achievements. Our influence brought the villages such innovations as the petrol lamp and the European plough. At our clinic they received extensive medical care from the doctor, not yet a permanent resident, and from the nurse. . . . Many Arabs came asking for help and advice in their farm work and would turn to the different persons in charge of our agriculture branches. . . . Naturally our advice and help were always offered willingly, and thus the Arabs became regular guests in our yard and dining hall.[22]

Ironically, for a movement legitimizing its ownership of land by a terminology of progress, it was the indigenous Palestinians who instructed settlers about caring for the land. No amount of modern machinery or science (some of which the indigenous were already using) could replace indigenous knowledge, which clearly was deemed highly valuable. It was the Palestinians who taught the Zionist settlers methods of relating to the land. Even in this terse memory, a hierarchizing division between indigenous and settler is created. The indigenous are described in relation to the natural, whereas the settler possesses scientific knowledge and technology (doctors, machinery, pesticides). This binary of primitive versus modern underlies the way Zionist settlers epistemologically related to their neighbors, later legitimizing their dispossession and expulsion.

In spite of the appropriation of Palestinian village lands, which reduced their area, stalled their development, and in some cases (e.g., Jo'ara and Qira) caused their full or partial uprooting prior to 1948, the founding of the kibbutzim is often presented as beneficial to the Arabs.[23] Palestinians served the settlers as oppositional figures, civilizational foils against whom they imagined themselves as forming a civilized national self. Representation of the villages as backward, compared with the flourishing and fertile kibbutzim, thanks to the pioneering spirit that sanitized the earth and humans, was common throughout the Jewish colony in Palestine.[24] As Shapira (2004:133) shows, mythos and ethos were intertwined:

> A central ethos of the Jewish population was that of building. The *Yishuv* [the Jewish colony in Palestine] in general and the labor movement in particular

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[22] Beeri, Yesha'ayahu, (Shaiek), 1976, "We and Our Neighbors," *Mishmar ha-Emek News*, November 3, 1976.

[23] "Relations with the Arab Neighbors" (1940), reprinted in *Mishmar ha-Emek*, November 3, 1976.

[24] The *Yishuv* is the term used in Zionist or Israeli literature to depict the Jewish population existing in Palestine before 1948. This naming can conceal the colonial facets of establishing settlement in Palestine. Based on my research that finds commonalities with other settler colonial cases, I suggest using the term "Jewish Colony in Palestine."

saw themselves as builders of the land. Claim of the land is won first and foremost by work, and eventually the land would belong to those who redeemed it and made the wasteland inhabitable. Settlement, building, making the land bloom—these were an ethos, namely a set of committing moral precepts, as well as mythos—namely a weaving together of legend and reality that shapes and guides one's emotional relation to one's surrounding reality.

Representations of relations between the kibbutzim and the villages, including in personal interviews, emphasize the villagers' visits to kibbutz medical clinics. By reiterating the "good neighborly relations" between the kibbutzim and neighboring Arab villages, these accounts underline the settlers' superiority in matters of health and medicine. In other colonial contexts, too, health is a criterion of progress, and thus of settler superiority. Such discourse holds that colonial services provide positive contributions to the indigenous population, thus diverting discussion from the issue of appropriating resources to that of colonial savior (see, e.g., Arnold, 1993; Ramanna, 2003). What is at stake here is not the practices themselves, the technologies to meet modern Western standards, but to what extent such standards were used as legitimating features of a representational discourse that demeaned and ultimately dispossessed. This is the form that memory work takes: a legitimating factor in colonial obfuscation.

The other component in the narrative of disseminating progress—the founding of schools in Palestinian villages—was not actually a documented practice, but was a fantasy, reflecting settlers' perception of the indigenous who "learned everything from us." The three villages neighboring Mishmar ha-Emek—al-Ghubayya al-Fuaqa, al-Ghubayya al-Tahta, and al-Naghnaghia—shared a school that was founded in the early days of the British Mandate. Despite settlers' claims about Palestinian backwardness, and despite social stratification, Palestinians depicted themselves as having lived satisfying lives, as reported in oral history interviews I and others conducted with refugees. Among those I interviewed from the Marj Ibn 'Amer/Jezreel Valley region in the early 2010s, with little exception, the Palestinian refugees recalled plentiful agricultural products derived from the cultivation of their lands. In addition, Palestinians in the frontier benefitted from the modernization process urban Palestinian cities, such as Haifa, were going through. Yet the kibbutzim refused to regard the transformation of the Palestinian society on its own terms, in the same way they perceived their location in modernity as European refugee settlers.

Asymmetrical renderings of belonging to a national collective

In this mode of representation in memory, Palestinian villages were referred to as isolated spots, as if each village existed solely on its own with no connection to Palestinian society at large. By contrast, Jewish settlers were perceived as an integral part of a social-national whole. Accordingly, Palestinian villages' local expressions of opposition were considered the product of external incitement; the presence of armed Palestinian forces was regarded as "collaboration" with external forces that harmed local relations, and the presence of armed Jewish forces (Haganah, HISH, and PALMACH) was self-evident. This narrative would not reverse until 1948: Arab

neighbors would become, in the eyes of kibbutz settlers, part of the larger Arab nation, and the colonies themselves became isolated from—or claimed to take no responsibility for—the actions of the larger Jewish nation in Palestine.

Denial of the collective and national components of the conflict in kibbutz memory played a major part in presenting the relations between the kibbutzim and the villages. The words Palestine or Palestinians rarely appear in kibbutz documents. This absence is vital to presenting the relations of the kibbutzim with their Arab surroundings as based on good neighborliness. At times, this practice appears as an actual denial of hostile relations. For example, one settler recalls the relations between Hazorea and its neighbor village, Abu Zureiq:

> From the onset, relations were different with the neighboring village of Abu Zureiqwhich until late 1947 inhabited its own "*mush'a*"[25] land. To the kibbutz, Arabs of this village seemed permanent neighbors, and over the years many attempts were made to establish closer ties with them. Kibbutz members found it easier to understand that the Arabs had different rules of conduct, and cases of their flocks entering kibbutz fields, or fruit stealing etc. did not seem crucial in establishing these relations. This attitude towards the neighbors did not change during the riots of 1936-1938. Kibbutz members knew that the villagers occasionally took nightly shots at the kibbutz. But fortunately no one was hurt, and more serious assaults were carried out by gangs coming from far away, rather than by the villagers themselves. (Shatil 1977:50)

Here, the village was represented as bellicose, whereas the kibbutz was represented as willing to be a peaceful actor, always only on the receiving end of such violence. In the kibbutz imaginary, the Arab village could not have conceived of political resistance; instead, external forces must have instigated them. A division is also introduced between purportedly good (although perhaps truculent) Arabs and bad (violent) ones; yet, they do not coalesce into a collective. The settler's assertion that "Arabs had different codes of conduct" is a feature of settler colonial civilizational discourse that deems the indigenous temporally anterior in their ways of being. The two modes of in/civility were incommensurable at worst, and manageable at best. A system of settler colonial denial is preserved in this memory. The mere acknowledgment of neighboring Arab inhabitants as a people with willpower demonstrates the settler's conscious awareness of Arab subjectivity, Arab discontent, and a paradigm of "self" and "other." Kibbutz settlers remembered the Palestinian discontent, yet disavowed its causes.

A similar mode of attributing aggression to external "inciters" is found in memories recounted in a 1976 *Mishmar ha-Emek News* article: "Some claim that it is an Arab custom to attack not one's immediate neighbor but further away, but no doubt our good relations played their role here. When, after the [1929] riots, the entire group of Mishmar ha-Emek took hold of its site and we built a large settlement surrounded by a security fence, relations with our neighbors were back to normal."[26]

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[25] "Musha'a" land is jointly owned, whereby each of the owners has claims to the entire area, albeit respective of their relative share.

[26] "We and Our Neighbors," *Mishmar ha-Emek News*, 1976, Mishmar ha-Emek Archive, file 3.41.

It is notable that a colonial group putatively realizing values of socialist geniality could only find calm after erecting a boundary between their colony and the Arab neighbors.

A similar position was expressed in a written memory in a book by Yesh'ayahu Be'eri (1992:59), a prominent member of Mishmar ha-Emek: "Incidents and minor clashes, at times even violence, never bore signs of a national conflict. To both sides they appeared as neighborly quarrels, and thus never deteriorated into severe conflict. Mostly they were smoothed out at meetings of our leaders with the elders of the village whose inhabitants were involved, and only a few instances reached court." Be'eri confidently stated that "to both sides" this was not an expression of "national conflict," but at the same time, he revealed he was well aware of the power dynamic in the good neighborly relations. Depictions of the enemy as not present in neighboring villages but nearly always in a village further away continues into descriptions of the 1948 conflict, which often emphasize that neighboring villagers did not take part in the war against the kibbutzim; the violence was waged either by Fawzi al-Qawuqji's army[27] or by Arab gangs from elsewhere.

The legitimacy of land purchase and reduction of the conflict to economic compensation

The view that land purchased from absentee landowners was legally purchased—and therefore Palestinian tenants had no claims to land after it was sold by its official owners[28]—was repeated in different memories of the kibbutzim of the area. This is essentially an expression of the legitimacy of property relations and acts of purchase, regardless of the complex relations of ownership and use in the indigenous reality. Settler memory presents no traces of a possible contradiction between this position and a radical or Marxist analysis of political economic relations, even as other memory segments emphasized socialist revolution or freedom from an exploitative market society. Nor are there any traces of the tension between such a conception and kibbutz settlers' own social criticism of Arab society: the poverty of the peasants and their subjugation by effendis, landowners. Settlers perceived Palestinian peasants' insistence on clinging to the land even after it had been purchased from its official owners as a matter for economic compensation. For example, one settler recalled:

> It was well-known that the problem of vacating the land of [Qira-Qamun villages] Arab tenants was first and foremost an economic one, the question of the amount of compensation. Anyone close to the matter knew that the main dif-

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[27] The military of the Arab nationalist leader.

[28] Most of the lands were acquired by the Zionist movement from the landowners. In many cases, the landowners purchased the land for a relatively short time before selling it. In the years 1878–1936, only 9.4% of the 682,000 dunams sold to Zionists, for which we have information about, were sold by *fellahin*. Ottoman effendis, most of them non-Palestinians, who lived in Beirut and Syria, sold about 53% of the land purchased by Zionist organizations. Palestinian landlords also sold land to Jews; the sum of the sales to Jewish settlers was about 25% (see Shafir 1996).

ficulty lay not in the tenants' unwillingness to vacate, but rather in the internal calculations of the purchasing company, "Hachsharat Ha-Yishuv"—whom to prioritize when vacating and how to reduce compensation. (Shatil 1977:49-50)

For this settler, internal friction with the purchasing company within the Zionist movement—which he claimed preferred the private Jewish colony of Yokne'am—was ample reason for the ongoing confrontations with Arab inhabitants. Accordingly, friction and hostilities were perceived mainly as moves meant to affect the rate of compensation. A "purely economic" view of colonization requires the examination of such moves as a series of separate economic steps, not as part of a collective process. Actual moves of takeover on the ground are thus presented as devoid of any collective or national meaning: "Therefore the various 'conquests,' the onquest of certain plots of land essential to the kibbutz were regarded not as acts of national hostility, and apparently nor did the other side see them as such" (Shatil 1977:49–50). Because the indigenous Palestinians were not regarded as part of a national collective, Palestinian resistance during the Great Arab Revolt was seen not as resistance to the Zionist project, but rather as pressure on the part of "the gangs that threaten" them.[29]

The sole hesitation in representations about the legitimacy of purchasing lands from their official owners and the expulsion of tenants was voiced by Arnon Tamir, who raised difficult questions in his kibbutz, Hazorea. In records of the time, the action by Hazorea members in 1938, in which some Qira villagers were vacated with the help of the British authorities and a fence was put up, was named "the second conquest." In the 1970s, Tamir objected to this term: "our land takeover, which in the chronicles of Hazorea is unpleasantly named 'conquest.'" Tamir raised this issue with Uri Bar, a settler of the kibbutz's founding group, in a series of interviews he held with veteran kibbutz settlers. Tamir wondered whether the Arab inhabitants had input in their uprooting, and Bar told him they were compensated:

Tamir: I'd like to ask again—the land over which we expanded our settlement . . . perhaps it's not a pleasant question, but between us it's okay: was that land also purchased from the tenants?
Bar: Land is purchased from its owners. The tenant, by law at the time, had certain rights of course. But was never the landowner.
Tamir: Did we force them to sell?
Bar: We did not force the effendi.
Tamir: No, I mean the tenants.
Bar: The tenants had excellent protection of the Mandate authorities. There was no room for intrigue. There were those who wished to give us a hard time. Still, let us not forget the basic idea: a scantily populated land, [if]

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[29] Danny Nehab, "The Story of Kibbutz Hazorea' Settling on the Ground and its Neighborly Relations with the Arab Villages in the Vicinity:, written for the game "Looking for History," a video game marking Hazorea's 59th anniversary (1988), Hazorea Archive, file on settlement, lands 012.

intensively cultivated, can absorb so many more inhabitants by intensive cultivation.

Tamir: If these had been quarrels among members of the same people, they would have been quite normal quarrels.

Bar: That's right. Kibbutzim among themselves also quarreled over land.

Tamir: Yes. But things would never have ended up with such results, had the national element not come in.

Bar: Still, to conclude this, we should not have lied to ourselves and given over major positions [to the Arabs]. We felt justified in this act. It was very unpleasant and we would have really wanted it to be done easily, in good will, but it was a necessity and our right to do so. We were not half-hearted about it. Not like after the battle of Abu Sreik [Abu Zureiq, in 1948]. I was among those who led the local captives away. . . . I lived with the illusion that they [the villagers] would return some day. . . . I wrote: War is war, but they will be back.[30]

This dialogue spilled over into the Nakba. For Bar, a settler, the purchase of land and vacating the tenants prior to 1948 were categorically legitimate; his position differed on the Abu Zureiq affair, where Palestinian inhabitants were expelled during the Nakba. He recalled hoping they would return. Tamir, in spite of the questions he raised, did not focus on the 1948 events in his memory. The two concluded that perhaps certain difficult components made colonialism successful, but all in all, the process was articulated as inevitable:

Tamir: The consideration of using the war to create facts on the ground . . . I cannot say today whether this was wrong or not. It did relieve things for us considerably for a while and enabled us to establish the State, but whether it brought us closer to a solution, that I doubt.

Bar: We are not going into the question whether Zionist planning was right or wrong. At certain points along the way things could have been different, but all in all I think there was no other choice.

The uprooted Palestinian villages still existed in the memory of the settlers. The villagers were known; not well, but their existence was present. Still, myopically narrowing in on economic matters prior to 1948 obfuscates the appropriations and expulsions that constitute settler sovereignty prior to state sovereignty.

Within the five modes depicted above, elements of the first four are familiar from settler colonial discourse elsewhere (see Lloyd and Pulido, 2010; Memmi, 2003; Veracini, 2010; Wolfe, 2006), and in the discourse of Jewish settler colonial society in particular (Lloyd, 2012). The fifth mode is more specific to the Zionist case, although it is not absolutely distinct. Together, these modes are broadly generalizable to settler colonialism's governing ethos (Elkins and Pederson, 2005), both within Zionism and beyond. All five are representative of the use of memory as a justificatory apparatus, and as a foundational

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[30] Arnon Tamir: conversation with Uri Bar, March 16, 1976, Hazorea Archive.

mechanism by which settler colonialism—as a concatenated series of processes and structures—is perpetuated. Historians have long documented the attempts of Zionist and Israeli national figures to rewrite the history of settler colonial violence and appropriation (Shlaim, 1995), but the work of memory here operates on a more fissured terrain—one that attempts to obfuscate, and at times render mute, questions of complicity and implication in structures of colonial domination. Studying these memory representations is central to deconstructing the enduring power that animates social relations between colonizer and colonized. It allows us to rethink the nature of the "conflict" between Zionism and Palestinians, and thereby its potential pathways for redress.

Conclusion

This article theorizes settler colonial memory as a cultural mechanism of legitimation of territorial claims. I point to the inconsistencies and fissures that make memory contingent and localized, and yet also relational and social. Attending to the ways settler colonizers attribute political meanings to their practices reveals how material privileges are iteratively rendered legitimate. Instead of assuming the erasure of the indigenous in settler colonial memory, I point to strategic silences and omissions, to oscillations between disappearance and presence.

Memories illuminate the inner-workings of colonial logics. Indigenous existence endures for years in the local memories of the colony. I have demonstrated this by distinguishing several modes of representing the Palestinian surroundings within kibbutz memory—modes that may be transferable to other instances of settler colonialism. Reading "along the grain" (Stoler, 2008) of settler colonial memory has generative potential for comparatively thinking about the formation of structures of domination, such as in New Zealand, Australia, the U.S., Canada, and elsewhere, where memory productions relate to the indigenous in both commensurate and incommensurate ways (see, e.g., Caldwell and Leroux, 2019; Maddison, 2019; O'Malley & Kidman, 2018; Saranillio, 2008).

In the Zionist-Israeli case examined here, the existence of the indigenous in settler memory does not jeopardize the version of reality as articulated by the settlers. On the contrary, their existence contributed to a leftist, socialist self-image and moral claims of brotherhood and bi-nationalism. It is precisely selective memory, and not absolute erasure, that serves the interests of the settlers. The "disappearance" of the indigenous Palestinian population, whose existence "held back" the development of Zionist society, is presented as a one-time event in 1948, an event the settlers did not initiate and mostly attempted to prevent, despite the fact they were part-and-parcel of the process of land takeover that ensued over decades.

Settler colonial memory is constitutive, rather than simply eliminatory; it is a form of cultural or informational capital through which domination is reproduced. Here, Said's (1978:14) practice of reading is illuminating: "[W]e can better understand the persistence and the durability of saturating hegemonic systems like culture when we realize that their internal constraints upon writers and

thinkers were productive, not unilaterally inhibiting." Said is referring to literature, but the idea carries for memory. Memory is constrained by structures and delimited in its capacity to represent, yet memory is also fertile ground for production and reproduction of action repertoires and epistemes. Because memory is a malleable tool wielded according to its maker and user within given historical contexts, it proves a crucial domain of meaning for sociology to take up. Memory is inextricable from material machinations of power; disaggregating memory production can illuminate the shifting logics of colonial rule.

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